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mainly to an account of the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society and of the American Bible Society, through which the Old Testament has been translated into nearly every language of the world, and the message of Israel's prophets has been preached to every nation.

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### A HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION OF MILLENNIALISM<sup>1</sup>

Everyone is aware of the widespread revival of millenarian ideas which has resulted from the war, but scholars have been too much inclined to take up a merely supercilious attitude toward the movement. The futility of these crude speculations is self-evident to them, and they fail to understand the difficulties of many earnest men, by no means wanting in intelligence, who have not their background of historical knowledge. Professor Case has done a notable service by discussing the whole question in a serious way and enabling the ordinary reader to put himself at the point of view of the modern scholar. He rightly feels that millenarianism must no longer be ignored as a harmless vagary. It is already distracting large numbers of men and women from the real problems which are urgently awaiting the church in these momentous times, and the mischief is bound to grow unless it is counteracted by a better instruction. The professional scholar has here a rare opportunity of doing something practical for the religious life of the country.

The method adopted in the book is "to sketch the origins of the millennial type of hope, to note the functions it has served at different times in the past, and in the light of its history to estimate its value as a modern program for the renovation of the world." The introductory chapter deals with the hope as it first emerges in gentile mythologies. It is shown that in Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, and to some extent in Greek, religion we meet with the conception of a series of world-periods during which the conflict between good and evil powers passes through varying phases. The second chapter is occupied with the development of this mode of thought in the Old Testament and the Jewish apocalypses, and the two following chapters with the different forms which it assumed in the earlier and the later history of Christianity. In a closing chapter the results of the investigation are summed up and

<sup>1</sup>*The Millennial Hope: A Phase of War-Time Thinking.* By Shirley Jackson Case. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1918. ix+253 pages. \$1.25.

their significance is examined from the modern point of view. The author recognizes that the Bible writers undoubtedly looked for a sudden crisis in which all things would be renewed, and deprecates any attempt to read a "spiritual" meaning into their language. He recognizes also that apocalyptic ideas had in their day a real religious value, maintaining a faith in the ultimate triumph of righteousness in times of utter darkness and despair. But he makes it clear that the hope of a renovation only to be effected through a destruction of the present order belongs essentially to a bygone phase of thought. This is apparent from the utter failure of all millennial forecasts in the past, from their fantastic character, from the pessimistic view of the world which formed their basis. All later experience and reflection have taught us that the Kingdom of God is to be realized, not through any cataclysm, but through the gradual operation of redeeming forces; and the task incumbent on us is to secure an ever larger scope for these forces in the individual and social and national life.

The book is written with a practical purpose, but it may be commended to the theological student for its remarkably clear and succinct account of the history of apocalyptic ideas. Dr. Case has compressed into brief compass a vast amount of material, which he has gathered from widely scattered fields. His summaries are based as a rule on generally accepted results, but occasionally he half commits himself to views which are at best conjectural; e.g., that Jesus did not himself claim to be the Messiah, that Paul conceived of death and other malign powers as personal demons. Debatable opinions of this kind seem to be out of place in a rapid survey of facts, and may tend to bewilder some of the readers whom the book is specially meant to interest. The apocalyptic teaching of the various New Testament writings, particularly of the crucial Book of Revelation, is excellently presented; but a few paragraphs might have been spared for the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the primitive eschatology is so curiously blended with idealistic speculations. It is not a little surprising that in the review of apocalyptic history subsequent to the New Testament period no reference is made to Montanism. This was surely one of the most interesting of the millenarian movements, and was important above all the others in its effect on the official attitude of the church.

In so wide a survey it is inevitable that there should be omissions, and the wonder is that the author has contrived to include so much, and at the same time to avoid all overcrowding. Though he does not address himself to scholars, he always writes with conscientious scholar-

ship, and his book will appeal more strongly on this account even to the general reader. We have been particularly struck with his refusal to employ the weapons of ridicule, although he has sometimes to deal with theories which are patently absurd. He never forgets that the millennial hope, however it may impress the modern mind, has had a great and memorable history and represents a genuine type of religious thought. As a sympathetic and thoroughly competent discussion of a movement which in these days is attracting large numbers of converts the book will prove a welcome guide to the perplexed. It will help them to clearer light on the riddles of Scripture and the problems of their own time. In the larger perspective which it offers them they will learn to see the present crisis as only an episode in the age-long conflict with the Satanic powers.

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## OCEANIC MYTHOLOGY

A recent<sup>1</sup> volume by Professor Dixon is the first systematic treatise that has appeared on the mythology of that extensive region often known as Oceania. Professor Dixon uses this term in its broadest sense, and includes not only the island areas of Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia, but also Australia and Indonesia. New Guinea is included in Melanesia, while Indonesia is restricted to the Malayan Archipelago, although the more common usage is to include under this term a somewhat larger area, especially Formosa and the Malay Peninsula. The general boundaries of these areas are indicated on the map.

The material from each of the five areas is treated in separate sections under similar headings. The myths of origins and the deluge are first outlined in more or less detail, selections being given from those from different islands. A second chapter treats of special groups of characteristic tales, provided the material is sufficient. Another is then devoted to miscellaneous tales, while a brief summary brings out the local characteristics and the relationship to other areas. In the final chapter of the book these conclusions are "briefly summarized, in order that we may gain an outline of the growth of Oceanic mythology as a whole." No attempt is made at any special interpretation, nor are any comparisons

<sup>1</sup> "The Mythology of All Races," Vol. IX, *Oceanic*. By Roland B. Dixon. Boston: Marshall Jones Co., 1916. xv+364 pages; 24 plates, 3 figures, map. \$6.00.